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Sub Base New London's NUMI training offers better international medical partnership

Filed under CORPSMAN, LEADERSHIP, MILITARY MEDICINE (ONE COMMENT)

Lt. j.g. Ari Doucette, physician assistant, Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center



At an intersection of international partnership and military medicine stands the [Naval Undersea Medicine Institute \(NUMI\)](#) in Groton, Conn., where Sailors are trained for submarine duty as Independent Duty Corpsmen (IDC), including some foreign nationals from half way around the world.

Singapore is one of a number of nations that sends corpsmen to NUMI. The Royal Singapore Navy (RSN) has relied on the U.S. Navy's renowned facility for this unique military education since 2000. Medical Expert 1 (ME1) Henry Chiu and ME1 Rayner Tan will be the tenth and eleventh IDCs in the Royal Singapore Navy, respectively, following completion of their nine months of training at the institute.

Training IDC school in Groton is a 58-week program where naval corpsmen are trained to practice medicine solo, underway, in tight spaces, with few supplies, and under operational stress. It has components of clinical medicine, environmental health, food safety, radiation health, and more. The students have hands-on training during their clinical rotations in undersea medicine, dermatology, trauma, critical care, sick call and primary care, physical therapy and female wellness. The rotations take place at various locations around the U.S. such as Groton, New Haven, Newport, and Great Lakes. This program historically has a high attrition rate and is considered one of the most demanding in Navy Medicine. Similar to U.S. submarines, RSN subs usually have one "doc" onboard — the IDC. Chiu says he expects his job will be similar to U.S. Navy sub IDCs. However, as these are non-nuclear submarines, there will not be a radiation health component. "I think the other IDC students were jealous that we didn't have to do rad health" says Tan.

Well Prepared

In Singapore, every adult male is required to serve at least two years in the military. Those who plan to make it a career and move into specialized billets may be required to obtain a degree in their field prior to conscription. Chiu and Tan both knew they wanted to be corpsmen in the RSN, so they trained and worked as civilian registered nurses prior to entering the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF). After they joined, the SAF trained them to be paramedics, then to be corpsmen. They have been prepared for the challenges of IDC school and sub duty.

ME1 Chiu's most recent billet was on the RSN's only submarine rescue ship, the Swift Rescue,

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the first Submarine Escape and Rescue ship in the region. Launched in 2008, she carries a Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle (DSRV) capable of mating with subs from the RSN and from surrounding nations. The DSARV than transports the rescued submariners, up to 17 at a time, back to the Swift Rescue where they can be moved without change in pressure into a hyperbaric chamber which can hold up to 40 personnel. The Swift Rescue has an 18-bed sick bay with eight critical care beds, as well as a helipad for the emergency medical evacuation. Chiu says he enjoyed drilling with the rescue sub, which frequently exercises with surrounding nations. He also mentioned that training in hyperbaric medicine with the medical officer was an invaluable learning experience. He feels that these experiences will help him execute his mission as an IDC aboard a submarine.



ME1 Tan has served five years in the RSN as a corpsman. He has served shore duty at a naval center the majority of the time. He has also deployed aboard a frigate to provide security to oil platforms, and has participated in multinational training exercises such as the yearly Cooperation Afloat Readiness and Training (CARAT). He has enjoyed the many different work assignments and experiences he has had in those settings, and says this variety is why he chose to make a career of the Navy. Both Tan and Chiu agree that NUMI's IDC school is one of the best and most rewarding training experiences they have had. Next they will return to Singapore to complete the RSN's submarine school and then rejoin the fleet.

The Royal Singapore Navy

Singapore has seen a rapid growth of its navy. What started as just two wooden ships in 1965 when Singapore gained independence now commands more than 37 ships. In just the past five years, six Formidable class multi-role stealth frigates have been commissioned. These are widely regarded as the most advanced surface ships in Southeast Asia. The RSN's fleet has six submarines, two Archer class and four Challenger class, all of which have been acquired from the Swedish Navy and refitted for duty in tropical waters. The growing navy regularly exercises with surrounding nations and has strategic partnerships with the US and other allies. US Naval personnel in Singapore at Changi and Sembawang provide logistics and re-supply for the 7th Fleet. The Singapore Armed Forces in turn utilize U.S. capabilities such as air bases and the IDC program.

Going Home

Chiu and Tan have personally benefited from this partnership and so had the both our navys. Both say they enjoyed being in the U.S. and having some weekend liberty to explore the areas surrounding their training locations. However, they agreed that the best part of their training was getting to know their fellow IDC students. "They were all so friendly – they were just great guys" says Tan.

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henry

We're back in singapore now, and we're glad this can be shared with everyone from the states. Just got back from EX CARAT. it was a wonderful exp. Thank you.